

The Democratic Party spearheads war drive against Russia

Patrick Martin
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The Biden administration and the Democratic Party are spearheading a campaign for war against Russia that is bringing the entire globe to the brink of World War III.

On CNN's Sunday television interview program "State of the Union," Senator Robert Menendez of New Jersey, Democratic chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, and the ranking Republican on the committee, James Risch of Idaho, appeared side by side to demonstrate the bipartisan unity of the two big business parties against Russia.

Menendez dismissed the warning by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky that US talk about an imminent Russian invasion of his country was unwarranted. "He wants to create a semblance of calm as it relates to his economy," the Democrat said, "So I understand that."

He hailed the bipartisan legislation authorizing the Biden administration to impose "the mother of all sanctions... that ultimately would crush Russia's economy, and the continuing lethal aid that we are going to send, which means Putin has to decide how many body bags of Russian sons... are going to return to Russia."

"This is beyond Ukraine," Menendez warned. "We cannot have a Munich moment again. Putin will not stop with Ukraine if he believes that the West will not respond."

The top congressional Democrat on foreign policy was only one of dozens of Democrats comparing Putin to Hitler and advocating measures that lead inexorably to a military confrontation between Russia and the United States, the countries which possess the two largest arsenals of nuclear weapons.

There are two interrelated political and social processes at work in the increasingly hysterical campaign against Russia: 1) The disintegration of the anti-war faction of the Democratic Party that emerged during and in the aftermath of the Vietnam War; and 2) the pro-imperialist evolution of the affluent middle class, which, beyond Wall Street and the military itself, forms a principal social base for the Democratic Party.

The Democratic Party has always been a party of the American capitalist class. A Democrat was president and commander-in-chief in World War I, World War II, the Korean War and the first half of the Vietnam War. But as the mass antiwar movement gathered strength in the course of the 1960s, the Democratic Party took on the role of co-opting and containing antiwar sentiment within the framework of bourgeois politics.

A substantial faction of the Democratic Party came out against

the Vietnam War, associated with figures like Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee J. William Fulbright (Arkansas); Indiana Senator Vance Hartke; Minnesota Senator and 1968 presidential candidate Eugene McCarthy; Idaho Senator Frank Church; Connecticut Senator Abe Ribicoff; and Tennessee Senator Al Gore, Sr. In 1972, South Dakota Senator George McGovern won the Democratic Party nomination for president on an anti-war program.

Senator Church headed the Church Committee, established in 1975 to investigate abuses and illegal activities carried out by US intelligence agencies throughout the world. Even into the 1980s, most Democrats opposed US military intervention against the Nicaraguan revolution and other radical movements in Central America. As late as January 1991, 45 Democrats in the Senate voted against the resolution authorizing George H. W. Bush to launch the first Gulf War against Iraq, although 10 supported it, just enough to ensure passage by a 52-47 margin.

The administration of Bill Clinton (1993-2001) marked a significant shift. Clinton picked Al Gore, Jr., one of the 10 Democratic senators who had voted for the Gulf War, as his running mate, and his administration used military force aggressively in Bosnia, Serbia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Sudan, Somalia and Haiti. When Gore became the Democratic presidential nominee in 2000, he chose another hawkish senator, Joe Lieberman, as his running mate.

By 2002, when the Authorization for Use of Military Force came before the Senate, authorizing the administration of George W. Bush to wage a second US war against Iraq, the balance within the Democratic Party had been reversed.

The vote among Senate Democrats was 29-21 in favor of the resolution, compared to 45-10 against the equivalent resolution in 1991. The chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, who backed the resolution and managed its passage, was Joe Biden of Delaware—now the US president. When mass antiwar demonstrations erupted in America and throughout the world, the Democratic Party turned its back on them and embraced the war drive of Bush, Cheney, Rumsfeld and Powell.

Two more significant steps to the right followed. In the 2008 campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination, Barack Obama attacked Hillary Clinton incessantly over her 2002 vote for the Iraq war. He was silent about his own close ties to the US intelligence agencies, which personified the deep connections between the Democratic Party and the Wall Street-military-

intelligence complex.

President Obama quickly ditched the antiwar rhetoric of candidate Obama, using US military power just as aggressively as previous administrations. He escalated the war in Afghanistan as he carried out the drawdown in Iraq at the pace set by Bush, and launched new wars via NATO in Libya and via Islamic proxies in Syria and Yemen. Obama then sent US forces back into Iraq against ISIS. US forces conducted drone missile warfare on an ever wider geographic scale, from Pakistan through Central Asia and the Middle East and across North Africa.

The Obama administration was part of a broader elevation within the Democratic Party of candidates with a background in the intelligence agencies and the military, whom the *World Socialist Web Site* refers to as the CIA Democrats.

The final chapter in the Democratic Party's abandonment of any pretense of opposition to war came in the course of the Trump administration. The principal, even the sole, axis of the Democratic opposition to Trump was the anti-Russia campaign, based on the bogus claim that Trump was either a Russian stooge or an outright agent of Vladimir Putin. This campaign led to the investigation by Special Counsel Robert Mueller, which turned up no evidence, and then to the first impeachment of Trump, based on his pressuring Ukraine to dig up dirt on the Bidens by withholding a shipment of US weapons, which disrupted long-running US plans to escalate the conflict with Russia.

Alongside and connected to the transformation of the Democratic Party is the pro-imperialist shift that took place in the middle class, particularly its most privileged layers. As it emerged in the 1960s, the antiwar movement was dominated by sections of the middle class, particularly on the campuses. The end of the military draft in 1973 was part of a broader strategy of the ruling class to integrate a section of the middle class into the political establishment, including through the cultivation of identity politics.

Beyond the corporate and financial aristocracy, a section of the upper middle class—the top 5 or 10 percent of American society—has enriched itself in the course of the four-decades-long Wall Street boom, which is dependent on the dominant global position of American capitalism. The Balkan War of the 1990s, promoted by the Clinton administration as a war for “human rights,” was a turning point. As the WSWs wrote at the time:

The objective *modus operandi* and social implications of the protracted stock market boom have enabled imperialism to recruit from among sections of the upper-middle class a new and devoted constituency. The reactionary, conformist and cynical intellectual climate that prevails in the United States and Europe—promoted by the media and adapted to by a largely servile and corrupted academic community—reflects the social outlook of a highly privileged stratum of the population that is not in the least interested in encouraging a critical examination of the economic and political bases of its newly-acquired riches.

These social processes find their reflection in all the official institutions of the ruling class. In the media, one cannot find a single voice that questions, let alone opposes, the official government lies being used to justify war against Russia from a left-wing standpoint. There is no equivalent to CBS anchorman Walter Cronkite, who famously declared his opposition to the Vietnam War in the wake of the 1968 Tet offensive. Among the well-paid media talking heads, as well as the privileged layers in academia, imperialism finds an absolutely devoted constituency.

Pseudo-left organizations like the Democratic Socialists of America play a central role in supporting American imperialism and channeling opposition behind the Democratic Party. The liberal magazine *American Prospect* reported on the weekend that in response to questions about US policy in Ukraine, Senators Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren, and Representatives Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Ilhan Omar, Ayanna Pressley and Rashida Tlaib either declined to answer or did not return calls.

Such transformations are a worldwide phenomenon. In Germany, the Green Party, formed by environmentalists and antiwar activists in the 1970s, finally came to power as part of a coalition government in 1998, and the Green foreign minister, Joschka Fischer, a former radical “street fighter,” spearheaded the dispatch of troops to the former Yugoslavia in the first deployment of German forces outside the country since the Third Reich. Similar political metamorphoses took place in France, Britain, Italy, Canada, Australia, Spain and other countries.

Opposition to war is and must be centered in the working class. Opinion polls show overwhelming popular opposition to US intervention in any military operations in Ukraine or Eastern Europe. But this opposition finds no expression within the official US two-party system. The struggle against imperialist war cannot be waged through the Democratic Party or through any of the institutions of the capitalist political establishment. It requires the independent mobilization of the working class, on the basis of a socialist and internationalist program.



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